

they took a public opinion poll to see what was more popular or they were threatened with retribution by some politician.

Unfortunately, our Democratic colleagues and, in particular, their leaders have taken a dangerous approach, and they are not just taking aim at individual Justices; they want to undermine the entire institution of the independent judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court.

A few years ago, five of our colleagues on the Democratic side, including the current chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, filed an amicus brief—a friend of the court brief—in a case involving gun rights. These Senators made a not-so-subtle threat that unless the Court ruled in a particular way, the entire institution would be, in their words, “restructured.” That is nothing more, nothing less than a simple effort to coerce the Justices into deciding a case in a particular way; to threaten them that unless you go our way, the Court will be restructured.

Well, we know that those weren’t just idle words, given some of the threats to pack the Court by adding additional Justices to the Court. We heard that threat of Court packing many times. That was one of the agenda items should our Democratic colleagues eliminate the filibuster, the requirement of 60 votes before you close off debate in the Senate. They said they were going to pack the Court. Many of the presidential hopefuls embraced that idea in 2020, and the latest news has it that a number of Democrats are bringing this idea back to center stage. Disagree with what you think the Court might ultimately decide, and we are going to restructure it. We are going to pack it until we get the result that we want. Kiss an independent judiciary goodbye—the crown jewels of our system of government.

Earlier this week, the junior Senator from Massachusetts called the Supreme Court’s current majority “stolen, illegitimate, and far-right.” These are Justices who were confirmed by the U.S. Senate. It is dangerous and dishonest to suggest that any of their positions are anything less than consistent with the law and the Constitution.

Our colleague went on to say that the Supreme Court should be “expanded.” That is another way of saying they should pack the Court with like-minded policymakers. Well, whether you talk about expanding the Court or packing the Court, the result is the same. It is just another effort to try to politicize this independent branch of government—this independent judiciary—which, as I said and will say again, are the crown jewels of our system of government, an independent judiciary.

Well, even Joe Biden knows that is a boneheaded idea. The reason I know that and we know that is because that is what he said in 1983. He called Court packing a “boneheaded idea.”

Justice Ginsburg was asked about it. She said “nine seems to be a good number.” That was her gentle way of saying that if you start adding Justices to the Court or restructuring or packing the Court, basically, you are in pursuit of a political outcome and you undermine the independence of the judiciary and they are transformed into something far different than what our Founding Fathers believed it would be, which is an institution that would decide legal disputes, whether they be constitutional or otherwise, and would be depended on by the American people to present fair opportunities for all sides to be heard and then an outcome that was not tainted by bias or politics or policymaking.

As Justice Breyer has said, the very authority that the Court has depends on “a trust that the court is guided by legal principle, not politics” and that these types of changes—packing, restructuring, whatever you want to call it—he said would erode that trust, undermine the public’s confidence and trust in the Supreme Court.

But as we have seen the last few days since this draft opinion was leaked in an egregious breach of confidentiality, our friends across the aisle don’t want impartial judges. They don’t want an independent judiciary. They want judges who will deliver a particular outcome in a case. They want the Court to be an extension of their politics here in the Senate.

Well, politics has its place, but its place is right here and in the White House, where the voters get to vote for us or vote against us every 2 years or 6 years, as the case may be—or 4 years, in the case of the President.

I understand that our colleagues want a specific ruling on abortion rights. Tomorrow, it could be Second Amendment rights. The next day, it might involve the means by which we run our elections. This entire episode highlights just how far the radicals in the other party are willing to go to try to get their way. They don’t care about the long-term best interests of the country. They don’t care about an independent judiciary. They are looking for an opportunity to score political points and distract the American people from what they are really concerned about, which is their ability to put food on the table and support their families.

The reason why our Founders designed a Federal Government with three separate but equal branches is because they thought the checks and balances that the three branches would impose would be protective of their liberty. And when one branch goes too far, another branch can be a check and a balance on that and, ultimately, the Supreme Court could be the final arbiter on the constitutionality or the legality of what the other branches are trying to do.

But our colleagues across the aisle—by their irresponsible rhetoric undermining public confidence in the Court,

jeopardizing the independence of the judiciary—are blurring the lines between the political process and the judicial branch’s responsibility. And why? For partisan political gain.

An independent judiciary is essential to our democracy. The parties whose cases are being decided by the Court should never have to worry about outside influencers or whether politics plays into the decision-making process.

How would you feel if you had a case before the U.S. Supreme Court and you knew that your opposing party tried to pressure or coerce or persuade the judge to arrive at a certain outcome regardless of the law or facts? Well, that would be the opposite of an impartial tribunal and independent judiciary; but that is exactly what our Democratic colleagues are trying to do with the U.S. Supreme Court in this instance.

Americans have a constitutional right to due process of law and that precludes any attempt to influence or obstruct an independent judiciary for making a decision in an individual case. I would like to see more of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle fight to protect the integrity and independence of the judiciary. But if they won’t, then we will.

One thing is for certain. As Chief Justice Roberts said, the Court needs to get to the bottom of how this draft opinion got into the hands of the press in an unprecedented and egregious breach of confidence. The Supreme Court Chief Justice Roberts has directed the Marshal of the Court to investigate the source of this leak and once that happens, the person responsible will be held accountable. It is a very tight-knit group of people who have access to these draft opinions.

I have every confidence the Marshal of the Court will find the person who leaked this opinion to the press, and they will be held accountable in what will undoubtedly be a life-changing consequence, particularly if it is a law clerk or someone who is working for the Court. It will be a career-ending mistake.

But this is, first and foremost, a matter of protecting the integrity and independence of the judiciary from any force, external or internal, that seeks to chip away at the Court’s independence.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I am really beginning to believe everyone in the White House is clueless. After promising to lead us away from crisis and chaos, President Biden has instead made achieving the American dream

more challenging and, folks, a heck of a lot more expensive while at the same time making the world a much more dangerous place. Then, to cover up the connection between his actions and their disastrous outcomes, the President plays the blame game.

Since Joe Biden was sworn in as President just a little over a year ago, we have experienced record-setting inflation, making everyday essentials unaffordable; an unprecedented number of migrants rushing our southern border; our national debt topping \$30 trillion for the first time; the Taliban's retaking control of Afghanistan; and the world being brought to the brink of nuclear war.

Are these events purely the result of chance or are they direct consequences of the choices being made in the White House? You don't need to be a detective to solve this whodunit. Let's go ahead and examine the case.

All right. Over the past year, the cost of nearly everything has increased at the fastest pace in over four decades. A gallon of milk is up nearly 50 cents, and 2 pounds of ground beef costs over \$1.50 more than it did a year ago. Add in rising rents and home prices, and these numbers really add up quickly.

While Iowans and the rest of Americans are struggling to adjust their family budgets to the ever increasing cost of living, the Biden administration has repeatedly dismissed concerns about the price problem.

Last summer, the President said:

It's highly unlikely that it's going to be long-term inflation that's going to get out of hand.

Now that the problem can no longer be ignored, he is actually blaming corporate greed.

Get a clue.

The Federal Reserve says the reason prices in the United States have been outpacing inflation in other countries since 2021—when Biden became President—is as a direct result of Washington's unprecedented spending spree. It turns out you can't just print trillions of dollars and hand it out for free.

Republicans in Congress and even some Democrats warned that this would happen when the President began pushing one trillion-dollar spending bill after another. Now hard-working Americans are stuck paying for the Biden binge-spending twice—first with higher taxes and then again with higher bills. When you add it all up, Bidenomics is costing every family almost \$500 more a month today than a year ago to buy the same exact items.

So, despite the President's finger-pointing, this problem isn't being caused by corporate greed for profits, and it isn't caused on Wall Street.

The White House is using a similar setup to hide the true cause of higher prices at the pump. President Biden wants us to believe that the skyrocketing costs to fill up your tank are all Vladimir Putin's fault, but gas was on the rise for more than a year before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In

fact, gas prices have steadily increased since the President's first day in office when he signed an Executive order to shut down the Keystone XL Pipeline. On that day, January 20, 2021, a gallon of gas cost less than \$2.50. The President then signed an Executive order turning off all new oil and gas leases on public lands.

While the President was shutting down U.S. energy, he was helping to make the world more dependent on Putin for power. In May of last year, the Biden administration waived the sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. By then, gas here in the United States had reached \$3 a gallon. When Putin invaded Ukraine in February, the price was already more than \$3.50 per gallon.

So don't be fooled, folks. It is really Biden's war on American energy that has been fueling the soaring costs. While the Russian dictator is guilty of many horrible things, the higher gas prices we have been paying for over the past year and a half did not begin as a result of Putin in Ukraine because of the war.

It is impossible to miss the irony of President Biden's pointing the finger at Putin since the Russian dictator's aggression against Ukraine may have been emboldened by Biden's abrupt abandonment in Afghanistan. The poorly planned evacuation also turned over billions of dollars of weapons and equipment to the Taliban and other terrorists and left countless Americans and our allies behind while costing the lives of 13 of our brave servicemembers.

The President blamed our own military—he blamed our own military—for not warning him of the catastrophe that would occur if he withdrew all U.S. forces, but those claims were contradicted under oath before the Senate Armed Services Committee by his own advisers, who said the President was told Afghanistan would collapse. Try as he might to lay the blame elsewhere, the President singlehandedly made the call to completely withdraw from Afghanistan, which will go down as one of the worst foreign policy decisions in U.S. history.

Now Biden's blunders are threatening to turn the crisis at our southern border into total chaos. The number of illegal crossings last year exceeded 1.7 million—the most ever recorded. To make matters worse, the administration has announced that those attempting to enter our country illegally will soon no longer be turned away under the authority provided by title 42. As a consequence, Homeland Security officials are expecting a record surge of border crossings, which could reach as many as 18,000 people a day.

Just like his other abrupt, poorly thought-out decisions, the President has no plan to deal with the inevitable repercussions. When the predictable disaster occurs, the President will be surprised and confused and look for someone else to blame.

I could go on, but I am all ready to rest my case since the same set of fin-

gerprints is on all of the evidence of these problems.

But, President Biden, if you still haven't figured it out, I will give you a clue. Spoiler alert: The culprit is you.

Whether signing Executive orders to turn off American-made energy or signing budget-busting bills that are fanning the flames of inflation, the source of these problems can all be traced back to President Biden, with the pen, in the Oval Office.

It is right there, folks. Case closed.

That is how all of these crises were created over the past year.

Now, imagine how some of the other policies being proposed by Democrats, like defunding the police, abolishing ICE, or enacting the Green New Deal, could turn out if President Biden is given the chance to sign them into law.

Taxpayers can rest assured that Republicans in Congress will keep doing our part to make sure those bills never make it to the President's desk. And if the President tries to bypass Congress and enact its radical agenda by signing Executive orders behind the closed doors of the White House, Americans can count on Republicans to clue you in.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Tennessee.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, it has been over a year since Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS and the Democrats took control of all the government here in DC. They like the fact that they have got their hands on the drivers, and they are enacting their policies. But what is so interesting, as my colleague from Iowa was pointing out, is they continue to try to blame Donald Trump and Republicans for the issues that are in front of us.

Just a few years ago, if you would have asked me how I would evaluate a government that spent their way into inflation—recordbreaking inflation—surrendered our border to the drug cartels, and abandoned two Embassies, I would tell you that that sounds like an administration that is in disarray. I think most people would believe that to be a fact.

But here is the problem: We have moved beyond disarray. Tennesseans feel like it is more like a catastrophe.

This is not mere incompetence at work. Joe Biden is earning his disapproval rating that he was joking about at the Correspondents' Dinner last week. He knows that it is, indeed, low—some of the lowest ever.

The fact is that President Biden and Vice President HARRIS have had a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad year, and they did this to themselves. And now their allies in Congress are ready to make things even worse. They are doubling down.

This is what happens when you try to force an agenda filled with pet projects that the American people are telling you they do not want and, as taxpayers are saying, "You can't afford this."